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RUEHLB/AMEMBASSY BEIRUT PRIORITY 1944  
RUEHEG/AMEMBASSY CAIRO PRIORITY 9786  
RUEHDM/AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS PRIORITY 2686  
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RUEHJM/AMCONSUL JERUSALEM PRIORITY 6485  
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TAGS: [OPRC](#) [KMDR](#) [IS](#)

SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

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SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:  
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[11.](#) Mideast

[12.](#) Iran

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Key stories in the media:  
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Over the weekend the media reported on slight progress in negotiations toward the release of IDF Cpl. Gilad Shalit. On Sunday

leading media reported that Hamas demands the liberation of 1,300 prisoners in exchange for Shalit's freedom. The media reported that the list includes terrorists responsible for the deaths of dozens of Israelis in suicide bombings. On Sunday Maariv reported that Israel would be flexible regarding the definition of detainees "with blood on their hands." The media reported that Israel clarified that on no account will it release murderers. This morning Israel Radio quoted a senior Hamas official in Gaza as saying that if Israel does not release prisoners "with blood on their hands," Hamas will not free Shalit. Media reported that Fatah/Tanzim leader Marwan Barghouti is among the prisoners whose release is demanded by the Palestinians. The Jerusalem Post reported that senior Palestinian officials are opposed to Barghouti's release in a prisoner exchange for Shalit. The Jerusalem Post said that the Palestinian concern is that Barghouti's release at this stage will spoil his image and that it will foil Fatah's plans to run him at the top of its ticket in the next Palestinian elections.

Leading media reported that the Shin Bet announced this morning that in late March it broke up a Hamas cell in Qalqilya that had planned to detonate a car bomb in Tel Aviv during the Passover holiday, apparently at the time of the Seder, on the holiday's first night. According to the details released by the security service, the driver, a suicide bomber, managed to cross into Israel in a vehicle laden with about 100 kilograms of explosives. However, once he reached Tel Aviv, and for reasons that are still unclear, he changed his mind and returned to Qalqilya. Nineteen members in the cell have been arrested by the security forces.

On Sunday the Nazareth-based Arabic-language weekly Assennara reported that MK Azmi Bishara (Balad) intended to announce his resignation while he was out of the country, but several media cited a Balad statement issued on Monday according to which his decision to resign is not yet final. Leading media reported that censorship laws are embargoing serious allegations against Bishara. Ha'aretz quoted senior Balad officials as saying that Bishara is being persecuted for his opposition to the Second Lebanon War.

All media quoted Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad as saying on Monday that Iran is now capable of enriching nuclear fuel "on an industrial scale." The Jerusalem Post reported that senior Israeli officials brushed off the claim as "nuclear boasting." Hatzofe quoted US National Security Council Spokesman Gordon Johndroe as saying: "We are very concerned about Iran's announcement that they entered an 'industrial stage' of nuclear fuel production." Leading media quoted State Department Spokesman Sean McCormack as saying that the US is looking for an Iranian leader who will listen to the voice of reason, make a cost-efficiency calculation, and understand that it is not in the Iranian people's interest to pursue the present course."

Over the weekend media reported that an armed militant from the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP) was killed on Saturday in an IDF helicopter strike on the northern Gaza Strip. This was the first strike of its kind on Palestinian gunmen since the cease-fire agreement last November. However, Ha'aretz cited a joint statement by the DFLP and Islamic Jihad that said that the man blew himself up to cause casualties among IDF ground troops. Media reported that on Monday a Palestinian stabbed two Border Policemen at the Tomb of the Patriarchs in Hebron, before being arrested. Leading media printed an AP wire report quoting Egyptian police as saying that Egyptian authorities arrested a Palestinian in the Sinai Peninsula on Sunday. An Egyptian security official was quoted as saying that the man had allegedly crossed from Gaza to Egypt in one of two tunnels recently dug in the border city of Rafah.

On Sunday The Jerusalem Post quoted Kadima MK and former settler leader Otniel Schneller as saying in an interview over the weekend that an agreement with settlers resolving the issue of 24 unauthorized outposts by legalizing some and moving others to accepted West Bank settlement blocs could be reached within a few weeks once Defense Minister Amir Peretz is out of office.

The Jerusalem Post quoted Deputy Defense Minister Ephraim Sneh as saying in an interview with the BBC that Israel made a mistake when it used cluster bombs during the Second Lebanon War.

On Sunday Yediot quoted sources in Washington as saying that the US

will be able to supply Israel with Thaad anti-missile systems in 2009.

Maariv reported that the Winograd Commission probing the Second Lebanon War has requested a postponement of the presentation of the testimonies of PM Ehud Olmert, Defense Minister Peretz, and former IDF chief of staff Dan Halutz, until after the publication of the commission's interim report at the end of April. The testimonies were supposed to be made public by the Passover holiday. On Sunday Ha'aretz reported that the UN may form a committee to review weapons smuggling in Lebanon.

Over the weekend leading media quoted Peretz as saying on Saturday at a rally of supporters that allowing Yisrael Beiteinu leader Avigdor Lieberman to join Olmert's coalition is his only regret.

The Jerusalem Post quoted Anti-Defamation League National [US] Director Abraham H. Foxman as saying that UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has acknowledged that the UN has treated Israel poorly.

Ha'aretz reported that on Sunday the Shas party's spiritual leader Rabbi Ovadia Yosef implied that his party would support Vice PM Shimon Peres's candidacy for the presidency of Israel.

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11. Mideast:  
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Summary:  
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Eytan Haber, veteran op-ed writer and assistant to the late prime minister Yitzhak Rabin, opined in the lead editorial of the mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot: "The Palestinians have known for years what our weak point is."

Deputy Managing Editor and right-wing columnist Caroline B. Glick wrote in the conservative, independent Jerusalem Post: "Through their cowardly and unnecessary genuflections to our enemies, made under the preening cover of feigned concern for the lives of our hostages they have done nothing to free, Olmert and his associates place the lives of every one of us in danger."

Regional correspondent Ronni Shaked wrote in the mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot: "It is no secret that neither Hamas's military wing nor its field operatives are pleased with the marriage between Ismail Haniyeh and Abu Mazen."

The Jerusalem Post editorialized: "Only if the UN Security Council members are determined will they have a chance to succeed in helping Lebanon save itself, and in taking real steps to prevent the next war."

Block Quotes:  
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II. "The Black List"

Eytan Haber, veteran op-ed writer and assistant to the late prime minister Yitzhak Rabin, opined in the lead editorial of the mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (4/10): "The Palestinians have known for years what our weak point is.... No prime minister, defense minister, or chief of staff has yet been born in Israel who could bear the tears of a mother and the gaze of a father whose son is in captivity. All prime ministers who had images of strong men -- from Begin and Shamir to Rabin -- have paid hefty prices when they reached advanced stages of negotiations to exchange abductees and prisoners. Israel returned, among others, hundreds of murderers "with blood on their hands" -- including some who took part in the harshest terrorist actions. The coming days and weeks will therefore be hard.... But we will know that ... Israel will pay crazy prices for the return of its sons from the enemies' jaws. This is the Israelis' nature."

## II. "The Next Grand Bargain"

Deputy Managing Editor and right-wing columnist Caroline B. Glick wrote in the conservative, independent Jerusalem Post (4/10): "Since the ignominious cease-fire last August, the public has demanded an accounting from Olmert. At almost every single non-scripted public gathering where Olmert appears, he is hounded by angry citizens who demand he explain how he dared to abandon the field of battle and leave our soldiers behind.... The Olmert-Livni-Peretz government acts as though there is no way other than releasing terrorists, and so signing the death warrants of hundreds more Israelis, to bring about Shalit's release. But this is simply untrue. What is true is that since the government embraced defeat last summer, it has had no policy other than capitulation.... As Hezbollah, Iran, Syria, and the Palestinians show daily with their escalating saber-rattling, our leaders' continued incompetence since the war has brought us ever closer to a new war. Now, through their cowardly and unnecessary genuflections to our enemies, made under the preening cover of feigned concern for the lives of our hostages they have done nothing to free, Olmert and his associates place the lives of every one of us in danger."

## III. "A Strategic Attack to Scuttle Palestinian Unity"

Regional correspondent Ronni Shaked wrote in the mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (4/10): "A 100-kilogram bomb in the heart of Tel Aviv, at Israel's soft underbelly, on Passover eve -- that is not something that is planned by a puny terrorist from Qalqilya, and not even by the commander of Hamas in Samaria [the northern West Bank]. A terror attack on that scale is not carried out without either direct orders or approval from the highest command within Hamas -- this was to have been a strategic terror attack that would have long-term repercussions. It is no secret that neither Hamas's military wing nor its field operatives are pleased with the marriage between Ismail Haniyeh and Abu Mazen. They do not want Hamas and Fatah sitting together in a single government. They place no stock in Haniyeh and do not share their decisions with him.... The rift between Hamas's military wing and its political headquarters has also become plainly visible surrounding the Gilad Shalit deal. Haniyeh and his cohorts in the political leadership have no say about the prisoner exchange deal. They are mere observers from the sidelines, without any influence. Why Qalqilya? One might think that the close proximity to Israel would have a positive impact on that city. The truth is otherwise. Qalqilya has undergone more than any other city in the West Bank a process of rapid Islamization in the wake of the overwhelming victory Hamas achieved in the elections. Hamas's military wing in Gaza demanded suicide bombers -- and Qalqilya provided them. To our great fortune and good luck, this time the suicide bomber did not press the detonator. It was a 'Passover miracle.' We cannot rely on that kind of miracle recurring. And we shouldn't deceive ourselves -- Hamas has remained the same Hamas."

## IV. "Lebanon's Determination"

The Jerusalem Post editorialized (4/10): "[Hezbollah Secretary-General Sheikh Hassan] Nasrallah boasts that he will

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defend Lebanon. It should be obvious, however, that the more Hezbollah, an agent of Iran, is armed, the greater the likelihood of renewed war in Lebanon and of the fall of the precarious government.... It is encouraging that the UN Security Council is poised to take some action in response to Hezbollah's weapons buildup. The draft French resolution, however, seems to focus on congratulating Lebanon for its 'determination' to stop smuggling and urging Syria and Iran to enforce the arms embargo -- on themselves. This may well be a step in the right direction, but beginning to recognize the problem is not the same as solving it. If Lebanon really is 'determined,' it will be the Security Council that is letting Lebanon down and turning its own resolution into a dead letter by not devising serious enforcement mechanisms. Only if the UN Security Council members are determined will they have a chance to succeed in helping Lebanon save itself, and in taking real steps to prevent the next war."

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12. Iran:

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Summary:

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Intelligence affairs reporter Ronen Bergman wrote in the mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot: "Tehran is trying to guarantee that future negotiations about its nuclear capability will start as its technology already reaches the most advanced stage."

Block Quotes:

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"Tehran Presents: A Real Nuclear Program"

Intelligence affairs reporter Ronen Bergman wrote in the mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (4/10): "Ahmadinejad's announcement [that his country is capable of enriching uranium 'on an industrial scale'] is not news to Western intelligence bodies.... From a declarative point of view, Iran is ceaselessly trying to follow two paths and not turn into a total pariah state like North Korea. On the one hand, it takes care not to cross the border. On the other, it is not prepared to give up its ambitions to procure nuclear weapons. Since the Natanz site was uncovered in 2003, [Iran's] delaying and covering-up tactics have succeeded in repeatedly postponing UN sanctions. When sanctions were imposed, Iran moved to the next stage, whose purpose is to amass enough knowledge to continue the covert course, even if the overt installations are under inspection. If this is the case, why does Iran willingly admit that it is going ahead at full speed? In fact, the Iranians are boasting about scientific achievements that they have not yet reached, as their initial assumption is that any agreement signed with them in the future would start from the point that was reached. Tehran is trying to guarantee that future negotiations about its nuclear capability will start as its technology already reaches the most advanced stage."

JONES